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ABSTRACT

Counselor Trainees completed the author's Counselor's Foci Checklist. This rating scale explores seven concerns in the counseling profession: (1) clarifying roles; (2) understanding counseling theories; (3) being firm with clients; (4) being liked by clients; (5) being respected by professionals; (6) developing empathic listening skills; and (7) facilitating client growth. A concern is defined as a perceived need for professional growth. To establish validity of the checklist, results were analyzed using a principal components procedure. Results indicated a substantial correspondence between the structure of the counseling students' concerns, and the hypothesized structure of these concerns; furthermore, the checklist can be used to group students by their concerns. Findings have both theoretical and practical implications for counselor education. (Author/CP)

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# FIRST STEP IN VALIDATING A CONCERNS MODEL FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

All students enrolled in counselor education at a large university completed the Counselor's Foci Checklist, an instrument developed by the authors. Correspondence between obtained and anticipated structure matrices was examined. Also, it was determined that the CFC can be used to sort students into groups which are homogeneous in terms of the students' concerns. Findings have both theoretical and practical implications for counselor education.

The importance of developmental models in education and sociology has been well established by theoreticians such as Piaget and Kohlberg. Recent work by Fuller (1969, 1970), and a generalization of that work by Hall and others, (George, 1977) suggests that stage models focusing on the concerns of teachers may also have important implications. Put briefly, Fuller argues that teacher trainees usually face and resolve an ordered sequence of concerns, including concerns about self, concerns about self as teacher, and concerns about pupils. Hall has extended this model and argued that inservice educators progress through a similar hierarchy of concerns when confronted with educational innovations.

Whatever the merits of these two concerns models are, both rest upon phenomenological observations. For example, Fuller (1970) extrapolated her theory as follows:

> Data have come from individual and group counseling typescripts, records of depth interviews at graduation, from teachers' written statements and from videotapes of classroom teaching. A dependable pattern of concerns arise. (p. 10)

However, a rudimentary theoretical base for concerns phenomena might be offered.

It is suggested that the professions as professions thrust people into a broad spectrum of intense interactions, and that these interactions are what generate concerns. Most jobs require some degree of personal interaction, but the professions generally involve more and deeper interactions with people. Teachers must interact somewhat intimately with students, or at least sustain an image of such interaction; the encounter inherent in these relationships may compel examination of aspects or self that others can afford to ignore. The professions typically require special skills of practitioners; the expertise that lawyers must possess probably impels most practitioners to review occasionally technical proficiency. Finally, the professions usually provide services which have serious consequences for the clients served; the physician's knowledge that behavior can cost or save the life of a patient hopefully generates some forms of self-examination not extant in other occupations.

Of course, one aspect of profession may be used to mask the presence of another. For example, a counselor might avoid personal encounter by dealing with clients in cold, clinical fashion, as if clients were merely collections of intriguing difficulties. But most professionals to some extent probably feel the influence of all the dynamics discussed.

To date, however, little effort has been made to validate a concerns model for counselor education. This is unfortunate, because the constructs of such a model might be used to improve the pedogogy of counselor education. Suppose, for example, that students usually become concerned about developing personal perspectives vis. a vis. counseling theories only after having first resolved concerns about the practical question of how well they will handle situations where it is necessary to help clients confront issues. This developmental sequence suggests that the students would grow faster professionally and learn counseling theory more thoroughly if educators helped them fully resolve issues related to being firm before attempting to teach theory.

Perhaps more importantly, a concerns model could itself be used to help students understand and then resolve the concerns they experience. For example, suppose that students just beginning counseling practicum typically exhibit behaviors revolving around excessive concerns about being popular with clients. Students might be assisted in resolving such concerns if they knew that, although it might not be socially "desirable" to feel a particular concern, feeling the concern at a particular point in training is

common and thus understandable.

Thompson and Frankiewicz (1977) developed an instrument to explore concerns-related dynamics in the counseling profession. The referents of the concerns were: 1) clarifying the roles counselors play, 2) understanding counseling theories, 3) being firm with clients, 4) being liked by clients, 5) being respected as professionals, 6) developing empathic listening skills, and 7) facilitating the growth of clients. In developing the Counselor's Foci Checklist, an attempt was made to generate seven items to mark each of seven postulated dimensions of concerns.

The object of the research reported here was to examine the validity of the instrument. Specifically, two questions were addressed. First, is there a substantial correspondence between the structure of counseling students' concerns and the hypothesized structure of these concerns, where concerns are measured using the Counselor's Foci Checklist? Second, can the Counselor's Foci Checklist be used to group students into meaningful concerns-related typologies?

## METHOD

### Subjects

All students (N=109) enrolled in graduate counselor education at a large southwestern university were the subjects in the study. Each student completed two forms of the 49 item instrument. Form R of the Checklist requires subjects to indicate, on a 1 (very concerned) to 4 (very unconcerned) scale, how concerned they are about each of the items. Form Q of the Checklist requires that the items be Q-sorted into 9 groups representing concerns levels ranging from least to most concerned.

The subjects were instructed not to examine responses to one form while completing its complement. As an added protection of the possible independence of the forms, form R and Q items each were sequenced and numbered in a unique random order.

### Results

Data from form R of the Checklist were analyzed using a principal components procedure. All components (hereafter called factors) with eigenvalues greater than one (Guttman, 1954) were extracted from the item-by-item correlation matrix. The pattern matrix as then rotated to the varimax criterion (Kaiser, 1958). The two highest loading items for each factor and their pattern coefficients are presented in Table 1.

The correspondence between obtained and hypothesized structure was measured by a procedure proposed by Kaiser, et al. (1969) utilizing a program developed by Veldman (1967). This procedure involves rotation of an obtained factor structure to a position of best fit with the hypothesized structure. The cosines of the test vectors may be interpreted as correlation coefficients and indicate the degree of correspondence among the constructs. The mean of the obtained cosines (S.D.=.080) was .887. These results support a conclusion that the CFC taps the hypothesized constructs.

To determine if the CFC could be used to create meaningful typologies of students, a modification of a technique proposed by Stephenson (1953) was used. Data generated by Form Q of the Counselor's Foci Checklist were factored using a Q-technique factor analysis procedure. The end result of this process was classification of 61 of the students into one of two groups ($N_1$=35; $N_2$=26) of students. The students in the groups were homogeneous in terms of their concerns. Aggregate I subjects were concerned, roughly in descending order, about facilitating client growth, mastering counseling theories, developing empathic listening skills, role clarification, being firm with clients, being respected as professionals, and being liked by clients. Aggregate II

subjects were concerned about facilitating client growth, developing empathic listening skills, being firm with clients, being respected as professionals, being liked by clients, mastering counseling theories, and role clarification.

Based on these analyses one would expect the two aggregates to be differentiated by the concerns factors: role clarification, theoretical knowledge, being liked, and being respected. To test this expectation a discriminant analysis was performed. Least square regression estimates of form R factor scores were used as predictor variables. Before discriminant functions can be interpreted it should be ascertained if indeed the groups do differ on the predictor variables. This is a test of equality of group centroids and is conventionally measured by Wilk's Lambda. Lamda was calculated to be 0.446. This value is significant beyond the .05 level of significance. Therefore a discriminant function was calculated to be as follows:

$$Z = .058\,\text{Factor1} - .838\,\text{Factor2} - .086\,\text{Factor3} + .665\,\text{Factor4} + .646\,\text{Factor5} - .063\,\text{Factor6} - .694\,\text{Factor7}$$

This suggests that the items are reliable across normative and ipsative response formats.

Examination of the concerns in the two aggregates might

TABLE 1— VARIMAX ROTATED PATTERN COEFFICIENTS

| NO. | ITEM | FACTOR I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 | Effectively contributing to the growth of clients who are each unique. | .820 | .198 | .127 | .003 | .031 | .199 | .061 |
| 42 | How well I will be able to facilitate each individual client's growth. | .806 | .204 | -.042 | .045 | .046 | .109 | .097 |
| 48 | Defining what a counselor is and does. | .108 | .866 | .197 | .115 | .034 | -.014 | .134 |
| 49 | Clarifying my understanding of the role counselors fulfill. | .187 | .832 | .117 | .081 | -.008 | .074 | .131 |
| 36 | Being firm with clients when this is necessary. | .073 | .141 | .905 | .120 | .060 | .054 | .132 |
| 38 | Instances where I have to be somewhat firm or directive with clients. | .093 | .141 | .875 | .118 | .026 | -.031 | -.002 |
| 17 | Being liked by clients. | .060 | .096 | .059 | .868 | .124 | .098 | -.017 |
| 28 | How well clients will like me. | .008 | .153 | .148 | .867 | .146 | .082 | -.094 |
| 02 | What others will think of my counseling competence. | .054 | .060 | .173 | .035 | .793 | -.060 | .004 |
| 09 | Whether or not others will think I am a skillful counselor. | -.178 | .063 | .120 | .189 | .731 | .168 | -.003 |
| 14 | How well I can emphatically listen to clients. | .338 | .106 | .069 | .112 | .148 | .724 | .062 |
| 15 | My skill at being an emphatic listener when I'm counseling. | .441 | .129 | .082 | .074 | .130 | .741 | .154 |
| 10 | Understanding various counseling theories. | .004 | .279 | .117 | -.014 | .029 | .138 | .847 |
| 23 | Learning counseling theories. | .088 | .326 | .077 | -.037 | .033 | .253 | .815 |

NOTE: Items are from the Counselor's Foci Checklist. © Bruce Thompson and Ronald G. Frankiewicz, 1977. All rights reserved.

lead to a suspicion that the aggregates reflect a developmental sequence. Aggregate I subjects seemed to have concerns reflecting an earlier status in a possible sequence of growth. However, the mean age and mean course hours in counseling completed did not differ significantly across the two groups.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis suggest that the instrument performs as expected, and that it can be used to group students into meaningful typologies. What is less clear is why a developmental sequence of concerns did not arise. No particular hierarchy of concerns was hypothesized at the outset, but a theoretical exploration as to why this occurred nevertheless merits attention. A concern is a perceived need for professional growth generated by a perceived pattern of discrepancies between actual or anticipated performance and desired performance.

What are the dynamics of this judgment process? Presumably most people judge performance against some combination of two criteria: how close an act comes to accomplishing its end(s), i.e.- product criteria, or how closely an act conforms to

selected performance parameters, i.e.- process criteria. Furthermore, some combination of two elements of the act is judged against these criteria: feelings about the quality of the act, and more objective perception of the facts which define the act. By comparing these two elements individuals can internally assess how realistic are their perceptions of acts.

From this conceptual standpoint, is Fuller right in assuming that teacher trainees are particularly susceptible to concerns phenomena? There is reason to think so. Young education students have limited profession-related experiential background, so many judgments involve anticipated rather than actual performance. Also, untrained persons may be less sure about the validity of process criteria, and the students may qualify faith in product criteria since they know that these standards have not yet been mediated by actual attempts to achieve goals. Overall, there is ample room for inconsistency and projection of fears.

There is also theoretical reason to believe that teachers should experience concerns when confronted with innovations. By definition, innovations involve acts regarding which teachers have limited background; again many judgments will involve anticipated rather than actual performance. Again,

teachers involved in innovations probably have limited confidence in the validity of criteria they use to judge performance.

These factors may be less of an influence on counselor education students. Many persons who enroll in counseling have been teachers, and as such have interacted with school counselors on a fairly regular basis. Thus counselor trainees are older than most teacher education students, they have generally had an opportunity to develop fairly well defined criteria for judging counselor behaviors, and they may also have invested a fair amount of time thinking about their adequacy relative to these criteria.

Moreover, training experiences may themselves arouse developmental patterns in the concerns of teachers and innovators but not in the concerns of counselor education students. Counselor education programs may constantly focus on a broad range of issues while teacher education programs focus on topics in a more hierarchical fashion. These factors may explain why counselor concerns patterns reflect more of an idiosyncratic than a developmental sequence.

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